

May 7, 2015

I want to thank the committee for hearing our concerns today. My name is Jay Miller. I am a proud 31 year Michigan educator and practicing a High School Counselor in DeWitt, representing the Michigan School Counselor Association. MSCA is the recognized branch of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). I was a first generation college student. My Dad worked at the "Olds" right here in Lansing for 35 years. My aunt suggested that I attend Ferris. I graduated with my Bachelor's of Science in Education and my Master's is in Occupational education from Ferris State. In addition I have a Master of Arts in Counseling from Michigan State.

Similar to the poor condition of our state roads, the state of school counseling is a complex issue that did not just happen overnight. There is no easy solution. We applaud and support any and all efforts to increase the college, career readiness and most importantly the success of Michigan students. This measure in my opinion, has very little chance of moving the college and career going needle.

The data and trends are clear. Michigan is 46th out of 50 states in student to school counselor ratio, 706-1, and increasing (2010-11 data). The ideal ratio is 250-1. Michigan has no mandate for school counselors. 30 other states require at least a high school counselor. Many Michigan schools do not even have 1.

The premise and stated rational for this new requirement I find false. The data used, posed the question to existing school counselors (College Board's National Office for School Counselor Advocacy) on if they felt confident in their knowledge of the college admission processes. There are 4700+ post-secondary institutions in the U.S. In my opinion, ANY school counselor who says they know it all is clearly practicing unethically or irrational. College Counseling is a constantly moving target best addressed with continuing education and professional development. School Counselors have an ethical OBLIGATION to keep current. School counselors must attend college fairs, build working relationships with admission representatives, keep up with changes in the common application to name only a few. I completed my MA in counseling couple of decades back. Does anyone here think that if I had been required to take a course back then, it would still apply today? There have been thousands of advances in technology like that whole internet and cell phone thing.

There is no research that indicates a single course at any level increases college and career readiness. In addition, if this law as written were implemented it only applies to new graduates. With our declining student population, there are very few new school counselors hired in Michigan. More often when a school counselor retires or moves, the position is often not replaced and the duties are shared. The Michigan Department of Education is not able to enforce the EXISTING laws and regulations. Here is a perfect example; since the early 2000's, all Michigan students are required to do what is called an educational development plan (EDP) starting in 7th grade. It must be annually updated and signed by parents. The required elements include a career assessment, high school course plan, selection of career pathway and research

and selection of several post-secondary training admission options/requirements. Very few schools do this. Why? Primarily because there is no school counselor and furthermore no one from MDE to check and see if it is done.

So what works from our perspective? One thing is the proper utilization of school counselors where they do exist. Last year, MSCA advocated and got a best practice in the K-12 school aid budget that says if a school adopts a comprehensive model program using counselors for what they are trained to do they were eligible for some additional FTE dollars. The model requires an annual management agreement between the administration and the counselor that provides limits on how much time they are assigned to watch the lunch room, count the test books and do the scheduling. MDE reports that 132 schools have indicated they are doing it. I personally have spent most of the last week creating the master schedule for next year, monitoring AP tests and preparing for the M-STEP assessment.

The Michigan School Counselor Association is comprised of practicing professionals, who are boots on the ground so to speak, doing the work with Michigan students. We would like to request that we be added to the development and approval process as this bill continues. There is a plethora of research that has great insight as to what we should really be doing from a policy basis based on what works in other states. We have re-established a working relationship with MDE. They are in the process of hiring a person dedicated to school counseling in our state after all most a decade of no one. The MCAN folks have done a wonderful job of raising awareness and increasing the college and career counseling issue. We believe that in full cooperation with School Counselors, we can help ALL students reach their full potential.

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